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SUBJECT: ADVANCING THE PRESIDENTQs FREEDOM AGENDA IN MOROCCO

REF: A. 07 STATE 108924

[B](#). STATE 044903

[C](#). STATE 019921

[1](#)1. Summary: To further the PresidentQs Freedom Agenda (Ref A), the Ambassador, DCM and other Mission officers have met with a variety of activists and interlocutors to highlight the importance of continued democratic and human rights reforms in strengthening MoroccoQs position as a moderate, democratic-leaning regime. Among other successes, our outreach resulted in MoroccoQs eventual agreement to permit international observation of September 2007 parliamentary elections. End Summary.

[1](#)2. In order to maximize impact, the MissionQs engagement has been built around the three elements DRL PDAS Farrar identified as crucial to sustained human rights progress: a) free and fair electoral processes; b) representative, accountable, and transparent democratic institutions of government; and c) vibrant, independent civil societies, including NGOs and free media. Per ref B request, below are representative examples of mission engagement in these key areas.

[1](#)3. Free and Fair Elections: On July 10, 2007, the Ambassador met with Ahmed Herzenni, former long-time political prisoner and current head of the Consultative Council on Human Rights (CCDH), the national body that advises the Government of Morocco (GOM) and King on human rights questions. They discussed a variety of human rights issues, including the need for Morocco to allow international observation of the September 2007 parliamentary elections as a sign of improved transparency. The Ambassador and the Mission as whole had been engaging on this topic for several months with the broader Government, but within seven days of the meeting with Herzenni, the GOM announced an agreement between the CCDH and the U.S.-based National Democratic Institute to manage an international election observation effort.

[1](#)4. Transparent Democratic Institutions: The GOM, civil society, and the international community have all identified corruption as one of the key obstacles to continued reform in all fields. The Ambassador has made anti-corruption one of his highest priorities. As part of his engagement on the issue, he sought out members of Transparency Maroc (TM), the Morocco

affiliate of Transparency International. TM has boycotted official contact with Embassy personnel for over two years as a protest over some of the USG's Middle East policies. The Ambassador was able to work out a mutually satisfactory agreement for an informal/unofficial meeting on February 5 with TM's Chairman at the Ambassador's residence that resulted in a constructive discussion on corruption as a human rights issue. Furthermore, the Ambassador engaged directly with leaders and members of the newly elected Parliament, a keystone of the Mission's democracy promotion strategy.

15. Rule of Law: To promote the rule of law in Morocco, the U.S. is training judges and working with the Ministry of Justice to improve prison conditions. The Ambassador has also worked closely with the American Bar Association to support its efforts to promote the rule of law.

16. Vibrant Civil Society: As part of our broader efforts to support civil society and encourage activists, the Ambassador met on July 10 with President of the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights Amina Bouayach. Bouayach, a prominent activist who speaks out on a variety of issues including women's rights, prison conditions, freedom of expression and police brutality, thanked the Ambassador for USG support for freedom and democracy but also challenged the Ambassador on perceived inconsistencies in the field of human rights in its relations with Morocco. The frank but respectful discussion that followed is similar to events with

other activists and civil society representatives. The Ambassador regularly meets with civil society activists in Rabat, Casablanca, and throughout Morocco including advocates for women's, children's, and disability rights. For his part, the DCM recently began a series of speeches on human rights for student groups in Rabat and Sale. Ongoing USAID and public diplomacy programs support party and parliamentary strengthening, good governance especially at the municipal and provincial levels, and training for journalists.

17. Free Media: The Ambassador has also spoken out clearly and often on the need to protect freedom of the press in Morocco. During a live television interview on March 11, 2008, on the occasion of the publication of the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007, the Ambassador explicitly mentioned press freedom as an area for concern and improvement. The Ambassador and the Mission have also repeatedly advocated the passage of a new press code that would decriminalize defamation, and he has voiced opposition to restrictions on opinion polling.

18. Comment: Both before and after the President's 2007 Prague speech (Ref A), the Ambassador and other staff engaged with the Government and civil society at all levels to encourage continued progress on reforms. Through our annual Human Rights Dialogue with the Government and contacts with activists, we participate in constructive and sometimes pointed discussions on human rights issues, including Western Sahara, where a higher degree of abuses persists. We will continue our contacts and relationships with activists and civil society members to further the President's Freedom Agenda. End Comment.

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